

GREAT PROSPERITY AHEAD FOR FARMERS OF UNITED STATES

TREMENDOUS STRUGGLE DURING PAST 20 MONTHS

Farmers Have Suffered for Necessities That America Might Eat.

ALL FEEL THAT CRISIS IS PAST

Many Farmers Believe Co-Operative Buying and Selling Will Help; White Others Rely on Farm Blue Legislation for Relief.

By James B. Holt.

The American farmer is coming back. He is beginning to emerge from the tremendous shroud of despair and suffering which has him bound for the past two years. His head is up more now, his heart is lighter, and he feels that the crisis is past. He believes better times are coming, although almost imperceptibly slow.

The farmer himself says this. In a 2,500-mile trip through the heart of agricultural America I have learned the true conditions from the man with the hoe and the man behind the plow. I have talked with the "old farmer," the rich and poor, landlord and tenant, with the country banker and the county farm bureau agent.

I have learned first-hand of the tremendous struggle the farmer has had to make both ends meet during the past two years.

Internally the farmer has suffered not only from want of comforts but of the necessities of life that America and the world might eat.

It was told how the value of his land shot downward, with a third that meant ruin to many who had to sell years for a little gain. I learned how prices of corn and produce faded away, how many were ruined and swindled by profiteers, how others were suffering for lack of the comforts of life, how the young men left the farms for the city and how those were lost for what of help to themselves, how the farmers' markets were shut to pieces.

For a year and a half he felt himself a beaten man for whom the future held but little.

Now his courage has returned. He has faced about with the light of a new spirit in his eye.

The practical American farmer is not claiming that prosperity is here. Far from it. But he believes it is on the way, slowly coming nearer every day.

All optimistic.

I heard everywhere, "We lost money last year. This year we expect to break even or perhaps make a little money. Things look better."

All this is of tremendous importance to the country. Farming is by far the largest of all the nation's activities. They call it the basic industry of industry because only by maintaining them can we have lasting prosperity and contentment. With the farmer prosperous and spending his money, the whole country should then experience better times.

In this swing through the "garden of America," I learned of men who had virtually worked for nothing in the past year. If a fair rate of interest had been allowed on their investment, or if a very small wage be allowed to them as workers, then their farm is a business lost money.

I was told of men, supposedly wealthy through inheritance of rich farms, clear of debt, who had to borrow money enough to pay their taxes. They could make enough on their farms.

Many believe the growth of co-operative buying and selling enterprises will help much.

The activities of the farm bureaus and government agencies in educating the farmer to produce more economically will help wonderfully, many believe.

"We are having trouble in reduction if everybody cuts back so suddenly, but the farmer is getting his share of white other classes stay up is not right." The farmer wants to make his interest in normal times to say nothing about the present.

In Clarke County, I learned, hundred hands were being offered \$1.25 per day and board. One man of 50 told me he was shearing sheep at \$1 per day. The average cash farm income here was put between \$300 and \$400.

Hoffeldinger Brothers, of Butler, Ind., agreed that they hadn't made anything but a living the past year. They own a couple of hundred acres of land.

"We are hopeful, though," they said. "Things are getting better. Farmer's easier around here. More men are willing to work on the farms now."

In Kentucky they are putting their faith on the activities of the county agent, a co-operative selling arrangement. The Burton men formed their pool more than a year ago and the black leaf men are organizing now. Last year, by agreement, the tobacco acreage was kept low. The price rose.

More tobacco will be raised this year, but through an intelligent marketing system the growers hope

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Local Bank Clearings Increase \$7,111,705

Bank clearings for the week as reported by the Richmond Clearing House Association totaled \$11,022,769, which compared with \$13,501,655 for the corresponding week in 1921, an increase of \$1,488,705, compared with the total for the previous week, \$11,527,268, there was a decrease of \$145,993.

Some think recent small price increases will continue—to the benefit of the farmer.

Some expect considerable benefit from recent legislation forced by the farm blue in Congress.

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Tom Bellay, who owns and runs a general farm in the hills of Clark County, Missouri, put most of the story of the farmer's plight on the city man.

The town merchant and manufacturer are still trying to hang on to their big wartime profits and the city worker is trying to keep his wartime wages, while the farmer has taken his cut and is big one, too.

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to keep the price stable. They have an iron-clad agreement among themselves.

Taxes Too High.

Albert Lang, of Lee County, Iowa, told of a neighbor who owned two quarter-sections of land, which he rented at \$1,000 each. The taxes on one farm amounted to an even \$1,300, and on the other just a little in excess of \$1,000, so the owner has taken his cut and is big one, too.

"We are too high," said Lang. "They are ruling us. Nobody can break even now. Those town folks make us a little bit off town. The farmer worked hard before the war, worked during the war, and he's hard at work now. That's more than the other fellow can do."

The salvation of the farmer comes in the form of the farm bureau and government agencies in educating the farmer to produce more economically, will help wonderfully, many believe.

"We are easier to get at the banks, too, which will also be of help."

At one rate the farmer is in the right frame of mind for better things this year.

Says Fulkerston:

"The farmer is a business man as well as a worker. He must figure a depreciation fund as well as interest on investment. What city business man would be content with 3 or 4 per cent profit each year? But it is impossible for a farmer to make more than 3 or 4 per cent even under ideal conditions. Last year we didn't make even 1 per cent. As a business we lost money."

"The farmer is worse off now than ever before. His morale is gone, about busted and doesn't know where he is at, but conditions, I think, are slowly changing for the better."

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The biggest problem before the farmer today," said County Agent C. A. Buechner, of LaPorte, Ind., "is the most economic production of crops. The farmer hasn't really been able to learn yet how crops can be produced most effectively and cheaply."

System Needed.

Said County Agent W. H. Pasternak, of Mount City, Ill., located in one of the so-called "poor counties" of the State:

"Farmers have lost money in the past year. The future is still uncertain, but it looks better than it did."

The salvation of the farmer is to learn what are the best crops for him to grow and how to grow them. The information system, which his father or grandfather followed, does not get him anything."

So far, it looks like a good year for crops. The wheat crop is nearly all harvested and it is good. Returns from States visited and from Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas, tell of wheat in abundance.

The price of corn was low last year and the corn belt will have a rough year, but it depends on the weather in July and August. Other crops appear to be abundant.

From the appearance of the fields and barnards, there are still plenty of workers to fill the needs of the nation."

I heard but little complaint about the inability of farmers to obtain decent loans. Money is easier now, some say, and the right kind of men can usually get loans at home bank at a fair rate of interest, usually 5 per cent. The government loan system, they say, has acted as a stimulant to local banks.

Mr. E. L. Mulligan of Chicago, Illinois, president of the Illinois State Bankers Association, said: "I have never seen a bank turned 500 times without the loss of any money. Therefore your mileage from the bank is greater than from the post office. This is the wonder of the modern times."

Mr. E. L. Mulligan at 331 West 17th St., Chicago, said he wanted introduced yesterday. "None of us," he wrote the editor, "if interested, write the Ford Motor Co."



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